Dictionary of Obscure Experiences

making it easier to go back to our lives

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Sometimes we have experiences that are hard to find words for, experiences that are unique, complex or obscure. Below we have started a dictionary for such times. We hope to bring these experiences into the light, as well as use our own words for them, not have these experiences re-worded. It is also about imagining words or phrases to describe these unique, complex or obscure experiences. We have chosen words or phrases that are playful, metaphoric and informal.

There might be many reasons for why it is important to create a dictionary such as this, and the following comments some of those reasons:

Seeing intricate experience
'There's so much intricate experience that makes up your life. And in this dictionary experiences are written like people are actually saying it. So when I read this I can see clearly everyone else's intricate experience and I feel less alone.'

Making it easier to go back to my life
'When I go to a really professional doctor and they can't find anything wrong I'd feel really yucky, like what I'm feeling doesn't exist. If I could label this experience, then it gives me permission to feel what I'm feeling when it happens again. It will still be there, and it will still feel like crap. However it makes it easier to go back to my life'.

These comments are like the truth
'I don't think people word it like this dictionary enough. You have to be so careful with how you say things because either you'll frighten people – like they'll think you'll do something bad, or they'll get angry with you for being in a mood. These comments are like the truth.'

It's a thing, it's real
'This dictionary is kind of like validating; it's a thing, it's real. And this is kind of good. Sometimes you forget that something's an issue until you see it like this.'

I'm not a weird alien
'I can feel silly or crazy for having these experiences. It's good to hear other people experience something similar. I can then see it as normal and that I'm not a weird alien.'

Easier to know your own mind
'I have a difficult feeling that comes with not being able to name something or properly express something. It's like the opposite of an "a-ha" moment. When you find

something that's relatable in these entries it's like being in solidarity, it can be comforting. It doesn't lessen the burden but it can make it easier to know your own mind.'

Easier to relate to
'You always have psychiatry describing it for you. But it is useful to have other young people who are here in this unit describing it for you, it's easier to relate to.'

Some thoughts on how to use this dictionary

We have three suggestions for how you can use this dictionary.

1. **It could almost be like coming up with code words to agree to use with others.** The following is a suggestion from one of us after reading this dictionary; *'Sometimes it is hard to speak about what is happening to me and it can feel heavy. I could give this dictionary to people around me and point out some of the entries that seem to describe my experience, instead of going into depth about how I'm feeling. It could almost be like coming up with code words to agree to use with others. It makes it a lot lighter for not just me, but for the other person as well.'*

2. **Consider some questions and discuss your ideas.** Read through this dictionary with the following two questions in mind:
    a. Which entries catch your attention and why?
    b. What ideas get sparked for you around obscure experiences you have had?

    Then, if you are reading this with others, discuss your ideas with them. If you are reading this dictionary by yourself, consider what obscure experiences you could add. If possible, then speak with someone about your obscure experiences.

3. **You and others in your community collate your own obscure experiences!**

A bouquet of oopsie-daisies: The thought 'I wish I'd never said that' when mentioning suicidal ideas and self-harm and people over-react.
Synonym. ***The Hagrids***

A rolling stone gathers no health: When you are so busy dealing with the symptoms that you never really get to what's causing it. *(Ref: the saying 'a rolling stone gathers no moss')*

A sea of same-faced nothing: Thinking of oneself as just flesh and blood, as some random animal.

Aaaaaah: The difficulty that comes from others wanting you to have answers but you don't really know what the fucks going on.
Synonym. ***The (not) simple explanation:*** *When I feel empty and hopeless and I don't know why. There's no reasonable explanation, trigger or warning. Nothing. And I wish it were simple, because simple is easy, others can understand simple, I can explain simple.*
Synonym. ***The unexplainable bad feeling:*** *The feeling you get around certain people or places, that's not butterflies, not a gut drop, nor any other 'typical' anxiety feeling. It's like a bad feeling in your body, like something is wrong even though nothing bad is happening. The feeling somehow detaches you from reality, having a dream or even nightmare-like effect.*

All at sea: Despondency from no diagnostic clarification.
Synonym. ***Pot luck:*** *Having different health professionals diagnose completely different things. It's confusing and can unsettle my sense of identity.*

Anything you can feel I can feel sharper:

a) A competitiveness with mental health problems that includes someone saying their problems are always worse than others.
b) Those times when I have to prove my mental health problems to others in order to get help or support. I then feel I have to be competitive with others.

Arse-sumption: When feeling judged by other people for the choices I make when they don't understand my reasons.

Autonomousless: When all of your control is taken away; be it via involuntary hospital admission or a 'voluntary' admission or treatment 'choice'.

The awakening project: When you find out some stuff and you start asking those really big questions. Once you've touched on these questions you can't forget them. You can feel at odds with the stories that society has given you. This can bring many experiences, including a freak out.

Bad ass: Getting off on doing the wrong thing. It gives you an adrenalin rush and you don't care about the consequences which can mask the pain.
Synonym: ***Dope and dodgy:*** *When you keep doing something because it is fun, satisfying and makes you laugh even if it is illegal. It feels good because you're with your mates and you run.*

The Biggest Loser: When someone you know loses weight and then you feel you have to as well.
(Ref: The Biggest Loser is a reality show featuring contestants competing to win a cash prize by losing the highest percentage of weight)

Bonding versus bragging: The difference between bonding over your experience and bragging over who's crazier.
Synonym. ***Weird flex, but okay***

The boomers: The feeling that comes when your parents want to help, but they don't seem to acknowledge the problems and they want them fixed.

Canvas person: A sense of just existing in this world between life and death and slightly outside of consciousness. You can do anything and not feel shame, fear, regret, guilt or sadness.
Synonym. ***Mannequin***

Castaway: Finding gratification through isolation as self-destruction.

Concretitus: When it feels as though your veins are pumped full of concrete. This happens when I am at my worst, when everything is heavy, clunky and it aches just to move. *(Ref: An inflammation in the use of the word concrete)*
Synonym. ***Dead weight:*** *When the depression is so heavy, you can't even lift a finger.*
Synonym. ***Walking through honey:*** *When every step takes effort, like moving through honey.*

Confusion infusion: When everybody is confused by you and they don't know what's going on**.**

Congratulations there's nothing wrong: When watching a doctor scrawl through pages of blood tests and then being told how healthy you are when your body feels like it's dying.

Cowardly lion: Anger at the cowardliness I feel at not following through with my plans.

Dali's death sentence: Loss or distortion of time due to depression.

Synonym.
Synonym. ***Rea-l-ethargy:*** *When depression has warped my view on reality. I think I should test reality but I don't have the energy.*

Dancing on shattered glass: When after a breakup your heart is fragile and broken like shattered glass and having to explain your break up feels like you are dancing on that shattered glass.

Demarcation: Even though psychiatrists call it anxiety and depression, I have symptoms all over the place.

Density: When anxiety shrinks your world to the point where even the most mundane things are terrifying.

The destructive cycle of self-destruction: When people around you don't want you to self-harm, so you don't do it, which makes you feel worse and you want to self-harm even more. It's a cycle.

Diagnestiny: Those moments when diagnosis becomes destiny. *(Ref: 'diagnosis destiny')*

Drooping: A heaviness in your head when nothing's happened. It often begins in the morning so you don't even have the option of starting your day on a good note.

Dry tears: When you've been crying for so long that you can't cry anymore, but you're still crying.

Eggshellitis: Wanting people to tread on eggshells around you, but not wanting them to tread on eggshells around you. *(Ref: an inflammation of the 'treading on eggshells' saying)*

The emotional heart block: Sometimes I feel heart blocked, suffocated. There's no way to express the feelings. It's low, sad and anxious all stuck inside.

Eternal flame: When the list is never-ending; there's a diagnosis being added all the time.

Existential balaclava: When you wear a mask for so long that you end up losing a sense of what's real and what's not real in yourself. *(Ref: Existential; relating to, or affirming existence)*
Synonym. ***Nothingness****: If I don't have a self, what do I have left?*

Existential envy:

a) Feeling like you have so many problems compared to others and asking yourself – even when you know everyone has difficulties – 'why do people seem to find life so easy when I don't?'
b) A resentment that someone gets to be happy.

Existential surrealism: When you don't know how many days it's been and you're in bed thinking weird shit about the entire universe. It's like your imagination is on steroids.
Synonym. ***What the fuck:*** *The thought 'we're on a rock in nothingness and no one knows anything about what happens when you die, or why we're here.' It brings a sense of wonder and frustration.*

Failing to meet a timeline: The sadness and frustration that comes when someone who cares for me implies or says that my mental health recovery isn't working well with their timeline. It makes me feel like I'm doing everything I can but it's still not good enough. *(Ref: a re-purposing of the phrase, 'Failing to meet a deadline')*
Synonym. ***Falling from the high bar:*** *When someone close sets the bar so high for you that it's like the progress you're making is stupid in comparison.*
*Synonym****. The impossible high jump:*** *The sense of never being good enough when you constantly try to reach someone's expectation of you.*
Synonym. ***Pushing failure:*** *When I feel like I could be doing something amazing with my life, so I push myself to do amazing things, I can't do them, and I feel like a failure.*

Fake it 'till you can't make it: Those times when I smile or laugh and people read it as 'you're sweet sis', but they get it wrong because I'm really not okay on the inside.
Synonym. ***Keep up appearances and carry on:*** *Showing others that everything is fine, everything is normal, I'm not breaking down or losing my sanity. I do this because I don't want to bother anybody and I also don't want to admit to myself that something is wrong. (Ref: 'Keep Calm and Carry On' was a motivational poster produced by the British government in 1939 in preparation for World War II)*
Related phrase: ***Fake it 'till you make it:*** *When I don't want to fake it for others to think I'm fine, but I want to fake it so that I can trick myself into thinking I'm fine.*

False alarms: When the smoke alarm goes off as a result of water vapour not smoke and you end up not trusting the alarm. It's like a burglar alarm going off if your friend comes in the door, yet when a burglar walks in, you don't react.

Finding your sole: The sense that you are only your mental health problems and they will always be there.

Fishing without bait: reading this dictionary and not remembering any of it and/or not being present while it's being read.
Synonym. ***Whadutorkinbout?***

Floating: Best understood by the following analogy: if you are snorkeling and you come across a current; you could swim against it but sometimes you are too exhausted and you just float. The current then takes you in whatever direction it's going even if that direction is much less interesting or even dangerous.

Forget me not: Those times when I only remember the emotions, but not the details of a traumatic event. This might happen especially in high stress situations such as when the police are asking about specific details of an event. It can feel just chemical and when I'm asked to 'work on things' I can't. It's like I can nearly forget the trauma, but not quite. *(Ref: Forget-Me-Not is the colloquial name for the flower from the plant genus Myosotis)*
Synonym. ***Hide and don't seek:*** *When you've held in such a dark secret like sexual violence for a long time. It can be easiest to keep the dark secret, as it's hard to stand up for yourself. (Ref: The game 'hide and go seek' involves one person locating others who are hiding)*
Synonym. ***Too close for comfort:*** *When you don't want to explain the experience because it brings it back and you get vivid images that go on replay in your head.*
Synonym. ***Robbers and cops:*** *When it's like reverse cops and robbers; instead of you trying to find the bad person, the bad memories, the bad thing, they come and find you.*
Synonym. ***Shielding:*** *Those times when you hold all the trauma in because you're worried about people finding out the truth and what it might mean for them.*

The Form Identity: The process of mental health services trying to get to know me through mental health records rather than through speaking with me. Those records don't recognise my skills, my achievements, how I've overcome things or who I am at my best. I can feel worse when this is done and see it as inaccurate. *(Ref: the 2002 film 'The Bourne Identity')*
Antonym. ***Read your fucking notes:*** *When you have to repeat the negative parts of your story multiple times to multiple people.*

Franken-psyche: When you feel that you are a mix of other people's different traits and characteristics. Then you do not know what's you and you can feel like a liar.

Friend limbo: When you're angry with your friends for not reaching out and you might want to let them go, but you really want them to be your friends.

Fuck-it moment: When you hit a point and then go a bit further than that point. You know you can't live like this anymore, that you can't clean any of this up. You can get a strange motivation or a rush and a sense that you can make it all different, maybe better and do anything, as it doesn't matter anymore.

The great depression: Trying to get across the feeling of numbness and all that there is with depression. *(Ref: 'The Great Depression' was the longest economic recession of the 20th century)*

Guilt's business trip: When the day was good but you finish it in a bad way. It's like you're ungrateful for the good parts of the day. You can then feel guilty, and that the good times shouldn't be wasted on you.

Happysad: When you're in a sad place, and the sadness around you, be it people, music or books, makes you happier because it consoles or justifies your own sadness.

Harebrain: The sense that our brains are too fast for the speed of our lives as it generally takes a lot of time to change your path. We can also replay so many things so quickly in our heads when we have a lot of time.
*Synonym. **Back to the future:** When my thoughts are ahead of me, sometimes jumping thirty years on. This is often in order to avoid anxiety by predicting what will happen. It stops me from the unknown as I've already planned it (Ref: The 1985 film 'Back to the Future'. It is a science fiction film that involves time travel.)*

I give up: When feeling weak, not having the strength to define yourself anymore other than through the illness.

I hate that I love you: Wanting shitty people back in your life, even after they screw you over.

Impotential: When you feel impotent to act on the potential you apparently have. People can say 'don't worry, next time it will be great' and it never seems to be. The potential you apparently have is more like a burden than a blessing. *(Ref: 'impotent-potential')*
*Synonym. **Tainted glass:** When people tell you that you have a quality you can't see. It can be frustrating as you wish you could have this quality but you can't find it.*

Inception: When I'm waking up and waking up and waking up and I'm still feeling dissociated. *(Ref: The 2010 film 'Inception'. The main storyline involved entering a dream within a dream within a dream.)*

Left to burn: When someone has the power to fuck up your life, and if they do, they don't know enough about what they have done.

Look mum, no hands: Making a choice about what to do in life, and even if it's a bad choice, it's your choice, not theirs.

Mashed potato: When your brain is so thick with fog, you can't seem to get anything through, you can't think in a straight line.

Medication roulette: When you feel like a medication dartboard – where they try medications on you with no apparent logic.
*Synonym. **Vitamin me:** When you take so many meds, a new one every month, and they don't do shit. I end up forgetting their names or what they're for. (Ref: Vitamin C)*
*Synonym. **Old young person:** When they're giving you so many meds that you feel like you're in an old person's home.*

Miles walked in communal footwear: The sense that you want someone to have the same experience as you when you are sharing, so that they understand and you don't feel alone, but also not wanting them to experience where you have been.

Mindfulness conundrum: When the only thing worse than people telling you what to do is those times when you try out what they tell you to do and it actually helps. Yoga is really annoying in this way. *(Ref: 'Mindfulness' is a common suggestion for people who struggle with mental health concerns, especially anxiety)*

Morbid vacation: Wanting to go into a coma and have a break from things; not wanting to die, but not wanting to live.

The Morgan Freemans:

a) When you become so detached from your story because you've re-told it so many times that it feels like you're narrating someone else's story.
b) When walking out of a psychiatrist's office and realising, 'fuck, I just downplayed all my symptoms' because you've become so detached from your own story.

Nelling:

a) Wanting people to know but not wanting to tell them.
b) Wanting people to understand without you saying and getting angry because they don't know.
c) Wanting people to understand but not being able to say it because you feel like they might just make it worse and agitate your emotionally heightened state.
d) Not saying something for fear of a sickening feeling that I'll die on the spot if I'm invalidated or misunderstood. *(Ref: 'not-telling')*

Never-ending cycle: Those times when you think 'why did I even bother to do those things to feel better when none of it helped?' You can feel embarrassed for even having hope.
Synonym. ***'These days' by Powderfinger***

Not worth - the effort: When seemingly the only means for your self-worth gets taken away from you, be it your perfect school grades, your low weight, your mask or whatever. It takes so much effort to do this and life can feel not worth living when you're meant to let them go.

Only God can judge me: The shame in explaining and experiencing abandoned, fantasised or failed.

Organ Vomit: When you're so distressed that you feel like your organs are going to come up through your mouth.

Panadol please: Wanting to rip your head off to stop your thoughts that are slowly killing you.

Profound nothingness: When your brain is blank and you can't express anything, like you're a zombie robot.

Red herring happiness: When I feel better than bad I can feel like I'm obscuring something, like I'm not resolving an issue. It brings uneasiness. *(Ref: A 'red herring' is a piece of information that is intended to be misleading)*
Synonym. ***The happiness trap:*** *The disbelief that this happiness will last. This disbelief then tends to squash the happiness anyway. (Ref: The 2008 book 'The Happiness Trap' by Russ Harris)*
Synonym. ***Calm before the storm.***

Redundant diagnosis: When you learn things about the illness and you can understand and rationalise it, but it doesn't change how you feel and you can end up feeling stupid or powerless to change things.

Rubik's Cube of life: When you want things to all line up at the same time and it never does; something always seems to go wrong after one problem gets solved. *(Ref: The Rubik's Cube is a toy that was invented in 1974. In order to solve the cube one has to align the six different colours on the six sides)*

Run gender run: When the following analogy fits; 'I am travelling in a room full of shifting staircases, like at Hogwarts, with the stairs falling off behind me as I run uphill. There are two landings, labelled 'man' and 'woman', but they're far off and unreachable. Most staircases are occupied by screaming Dysphoria Monsters I have to run through. Every now and then I get lucky and collect a Euphoria gem instead. It's all moving so fast I can barely stay on my feet and my destination is completely out of sight. But at least I'm running. Occasionally I see someone else making the same run. We yell advice to each other, sometimes run together before the staircases separate us again. Sometimes we see people who have found their own happy landing and we stop to talk, but it's their landing not mine and I have to keep going.' *(Ref: 'Run Lola Run' is a 1998 film. The main storyline involves the protagonist having to find 100,000 Deutschmarks within twenty minutes.)*

Schrodinger's emotions: The feeling of being both really suicidal and really anxious about dying; it's like two mental health problems competing. *(Ref: 'Schrodinger's Cat' is a thought experiment sometimes spoken of as a paradox that involves a cat being simultaneously both alive and dead)*

Self-validation paradox: Not wanting to be mentally ill, but wanting to be understood as mentally ill enough to be worthy of treatment.
*Synonym: **The ill effect:** Not wanting to get better because your relationships, and so your validation, are built on being sick.*

The separation: When I separate my brain from me or my soul. I use a logic that there must be a soul and my brain is trying to obliterate it as well as itself.

Serving suggestions: The suggestions people offer you for your life, which don't seem to work, the measurements are wrong. When you don't do them it can be seen as you not trying.
*Synonym. **Three bags full sir (madam/mate):** Agreeing to do something suggested by mental health workers that I don't think will work but is easy to do so I don't have to agree to do something that's going to be hard work but may pay off. (Ref: this experience came out of a person noticing that mental health workers don't stop making suggestions for his life even after they see that the person doesn't do what workers suggest)*
*Synonym. **Look over there:** When they suggest something for me to do, and I say to them something I'm already doing, and they stop their suggestions.*

Shit-ception:

a) Being sad about your sadness, or distressed about your distress.
b) Knowing you're not worthy of happiness but being sad about the sadness.
(Ref: The 2010 film 'Inception'. The main storyline involved entering a dream within a dream within a dream.)

Shitty pity committee: When you pity yourself in a bad way and you end up feeling shittier.

Six times three equals fourteen: When you're trying everything but nothing really makes sense – things aren't adding up but they should be.

Spontaneous aching: An ache that may bring tears, but may not. It can be triggered by anything.

Stability is the goal but insanity is more fun: When stability can be really boring because it seems monotonous and hard, and being manic can be much more fun. As stability is the goal I have to find ways to have fun in it.

Stress-lexia: When you are flooded with stress and have a hard time processing information and get things jumbled or round the wrong way. *(Ref: 'dyslexia' is the medical name to describe different ways of learning, or sometimes described as difficulties with reading, spelling and learning)*

Teflonic: Being so focused on what's happening in your head that nothing from the outside sticks. *(Ref: Teflon is the trade name for a polymer called polytetrafluoroethene. It is very slippery so it is used to make non-stick coatings for pans.)*

That thing there: When you feel like you have a body, but you don't really fit in it, it's an empty shell.

Tiptoeitis: Choosing your words very carefully because people around you will latch on to the words you use and ask you to explain more about them. *(Ref: an 'inflammation' of the concept of 'tiptoeing' around something, of carefully avoiding something)*
Synonym. ***Not going there:*** *Not wanting to say things because you've said them before and nothing changed or it got worse.*

To tell or not to tell: When you have a negative behavior and you don't want to tell them about it because they'll get you to stop it. Yet you want help nonetheless and you also don't want to do the negative behavior.

Two-faced syndrome: The constant struggle with what's you and what's the illness. The impossibility of separating the two**.**

Unbounded: When I can't put my emotions into words, as they aren't structured, they're everywhere.

Undeserving sadness: Those times when you feel you don't deserve to be sad, especially when people are so sick or have been given limited time to live. With good physical health, it feels wrong to not want to live.

Vampire food: Feeling like a medical guinea pig. *(Ref: subject of some debate, but the vampire diet is sometimes said to exist entirely of blood)*

The vortex: When something happens and I get sucked into the vortex of spiraling negativity. The further I get sucked into it, the harder it is to see others. This can fuel self-destruction.
Synonym. ***The Whirlpool***

The walking dead: A total disconnect between body, mind and surroundings. Feeling lost and uncomfortable within yourself. *(Ref: 'The Walking Dead' is a television series that started in 2010 about the months and years following a zombie apocalypse)*

What's next?: The fear and hopelessness that comes when leading doctors don't know.

'What's wrong with you' paralysis: When someone says something really critical and distorted about you and you feel paralysed. You play back the memory of what's been said which brings dread and also an anxiety-type fear that you can't communicate.

Coronavirus Appendix

Castaway: Finding gratification through isolation as self-destruction. *(Ref: re-purposed from the main dictionary)*

Dan Murphys is still around the corner: When your routine doesn't change at all as a result of the lockdown; it's like nothing, it's the same.

The Houdini routine: When your entire routine and schedule disappears in 48 hours.

No FOMO: Knowing it's a good time to be locked in a hospital as you know you're not missing out on anything.

Memalysis: Imagining the analysis of our coronavirus meme humour in 200 years time. I think of how a lengthy class could be dedicated to just one meme as you have to be following memes for a long time in order to understand them.

Second hand panic: You know it's bad to panic buy, but you're scared because everyone else is panic buying so you do.

Shit-ception:

a) ***When you're isolated from the isolation because the coronavirus restrictions occurred while you were in hospital.***